

The background of the page is a photograph of a person painting a drum. The person's hand is visible, holding a brush and applying paint to the drum's surface. Various items are scattered around, including a large feather, a hat, and other objects. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

TRIBAL RELATIONS STRATEGIC PLAN

FISCAL YEARS 2010–2013

VISION FOR TRIBAL RELATIONS IN THE FOREST SERVICE

The Forest Service is recognized as a leader among Federal land management agencies in partnering appropriately and collaboratively with American Indian and Alaska Native Tribal governments and communities for mutually beneficial outcomes.

MISSION OF THE TRIBAL RELATIONS PROGRAM

The Tribal Relations Program facilitates a Forest Service Culture that:

- Recognizes the inherent sovereign status and reserved rights of Tribes.
- Honors the Federal trust responsibility.
- Excels at conducting substantive consultative processes.
- Supports Tribal rights to pursue vitality of their Tribal cultures, economies, and land.
- Promotes collaborative natural and cultural resource management.
- Uses traditional knowledge in combination with the best Western science and technology.
- Advances American Indians and Alaska Natives in the workforce.
- Respects Tribal connections to traditional landscapes.
- Seeks to enhance and maintain important relationships with Tribes and communities.



FOREWORD

The Tribal Relations Program of the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), developed this strategic plan to create beneficial outcomes for the agency and for American Indian and Alaska Native Tribal governments and communities. Consistent with Forest Service national strategic goals and objectives (see page 7), this strategic plan identifies specific goals, objectives, and actions to guide the program through 2013.



“Consultation is at the cornerstone of the Federal-Tribal relationship and the Federal policy of Tribal self-determination. It is the primary mechanism through which the Federal Government’s authority under the trust responsibility is reconciled with the Tribal inherent right of self-government.”

Joe Garcia, President, National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), Testimony Before the House Natural Resources Committee, April 9, 2008.

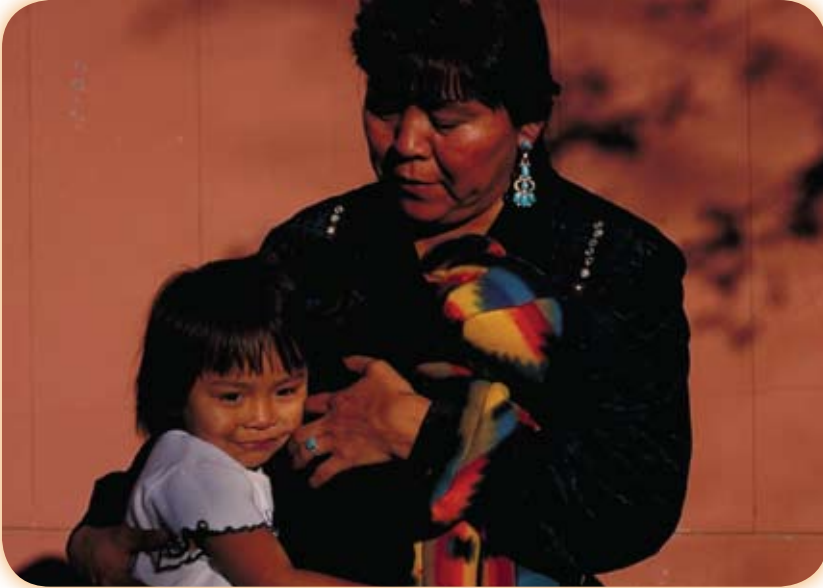
The Office of Tribal Relations (OTR) and regional Tribal Relations Program Managers (TRPMs) deliver the Tribal Relations Program throughout the entire agency and to all Deputy Areas—State and Private Forestry, National Forest System, Research and Development, and Business Operations. Tribal Relations Program employees, policies, and processes assist the agency and Tribes in developing and maintaining culturally sensitive working relationships. OTR employees and TRPMs promote effective,

substantive, and meaningful government-to-government consultation to collaboratively achieve positive outcomes for ecosystem health and cultural values. Tribal Relations Program employees support Forest Service officials, programs, and activities in respecting Tribal self-government and Tribal sovereignty, and in honoring reserved rights, including treaty and subsistence rights and interests. OTR employees and TRPMs also facilitate Tribal governments’ and citizens’ understanding of the legal and resource context in which the agency operates.





Throughout the agency, line officers are responsible for cultivating and maintaining government-to-government relationships in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, Executive orders, and agency policy.



At Forest Service national headquarters in Washington, DC, the OTR advises the Executive Leadership Team on current Tribal issues affecting agency management, and on how agency management may affect Tribes and Tribal members. The OTR integrates tribally related processes and policies across Deputy Areas and staffs. The OTR also works with USDA, other Federal agencies, national inter-Tribal organizations, and other partners to develop processes and policies to advance Tribal relations.

In every region, station, and area, regional TRPMs advise regional leadership and support integration of Tribal relations issues across program areas. TRPMs collaborate with other Federal agencies, Tribal governments, inter-Tribal entities, and other partners to develop and implement programs and leverage funds and expertise for programs or projects. Forest-level Tribal program managers and other personnel in various Forest Service units play important roles in accomplishing Tribal Relations goals.

This strategic plan is the latest addition to the growing list of documents (see page 8) that have, cumulatively, helped bring the Forest Service closer to the goal of being a model among Federal agencies for good Tribal relations.



THE FRAMEWORK

This strategic plan sets forth a framework for the Forest Service's National Tribal Relations Program. It serves as an instrument to help the program navigate through the next few years. It will be updated as warranted. The following goals will help the agency fulfill its mission and are intended to be a helpful guide to managers in the development of Tribal Relations Program workplans at all levels of the agency.

GOAL 1:

AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE RIGHTS.

Ensure the agency redeems its trust responsibility and protects American Indian and Alaska Native reserved rights as they pertain to Forest Service programs, projects, and policies.

GOAL 2:

PARTNERSHIPS.

Leverage partnerships to maximize mutual success.

GOAL 3:

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT.

Promote integration and utility of the Tribal Relations Program throughout the agency.





GOAL 1: AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE RIGHTS

Ensure the agency redeems its trust responsibility and protects American Indian and Alaska Native reserved rights as they pertain to Forest Service programs, projects, and policies.

OBJECTIVE 1.1

Support Forest Service leaders' understanding and application of their legal responsibilities for treaty rights, other reserved rights, and trust responsibilities, including obligations for government-to-government consultation.

OUTCOME

Compliance with the United States Constitution, Federal laws, Executive orders, regulations, and policy.

ACTIONS

- 1.1.1. Identify core competencies for line officers relating to Tribal rights, cultures, and traditions.
- 1.1.2. Deliver training in American Indian and Alaska Native law to all agency leaders, managers, and key staffs having responsibilities that may affect Tribes or American Indian and Alaska Native communities.
- 1.1.3. Work with the Forest Service Center of Learning to effectively integrate a Tribal Relations module within the Forest Service corporate Leadership Development Programs (i.e., New Leader, Middle Leader, and Senior Leader Programs).

OBJECTIVE 1.2

Support Forest Service leaders' engagement in substantive and meaningful consultation for agency policy, planning, and project decisions.

OUTCOME

Land management decisions that appropriately integrate Tribal rights and interests.

ACTIONS

- 1.2.1 Work with Tribal partners to develop templates for protocols, best practices, and guiding principles.
- 1.2.2 Support line officers' consultation activities.
- 1.2.3 Confer at least annually with Forest Service deputy chiefs and key Washington Office staffs to identify potential Tribal consultation efforts; work with those staffs to strategically plan consultations.

OBJECTIVE 1.3

Evaluate—and modify if needed—policies in support of the agency's trust responsibility, Tribal reserved rights on National Forest System lands, and implementation of programs and policies established to benefit Tribes.

OUTCOME

Heightened agency competence in meeting responsibilities to Tribes, and agency employees' ability to take advantage of opportunities afforded through Tribal partnerships.

ACTIONS

- 1.3.1 Work collaboratively with national program managers to revise Forest Service manuals, handbooks, and technical guides to align with existing authorities.
- 1.3.2 Evaluate, with Legislative Affairs staff, emerging legislative issues and provide recommendations.
- 1.3.3 Confer at least annually with key staffs to identify emerging policy work to address Tribal consultation requirements.





GOAL 2: PARTNERSHIPS

Leverage partnerships to maximize mutual success.

OBJECTIVE 2.1

Improve partnerships with American Indian and Alaska Native Tribal governments, nongovernmental organizations, inter-Tribal organizations, education institutions, and other entities.

OUTCOME

Effective and efficient program outreach and delivery.

ACTIONS

- 2.1.1 Organize and/or participate in relevant events that offer networking opportunities between Forest Service and Tribal personnel.
- 2.1.2 In collaboration with other program staffs, evaluate and adjust, where needed, agency processes and tools that support business relations with American Indian and Alaska Native enterprises to increase Forest Service contract awards to those enterprises.
- 2.1.3 Collaborate with key staffs in Research and Development, State and Private Forestry, and the National Forest System to develop and provide appropriate and effective technical assistance for Tribes.

OBJECTIVE 2.2

Increase the ability of the agency and Tribes to manage for sustainability on landscapes across administrative boundaries.

OUTCOME

Improved large and critical landscape management for healthy ecosystems.

ACTIONS

- 2.2.1 Support demonstration projects with Tribal governments and communities to showcase mutually benefiting aspects of landscape management.
- 2.2.2 Develop and distribute case studies of successes in agency/Tribal partnerships in research, restoration, economic development, renewable energy projects, etc.
- 2.2.3 Support agency efforts to mitigate, adapt to, and educate the public about climate change.

OBJECTIVE 2.3

Encourage integration of American Indian and Alaska Native traditional knowledge, wisdom, and practices in agency land management decisions and implementation.

OUTCOME

The agency creates management actions that are appropriately responsive to global and local environments.

ACTIONS

- 2.3.1 Incorporate, when identified through consultation, American Indian and Alaska Native traditional knowledge in agency planning, projects, and perspectives to support informed decisionmaking.
- 2.3.2 Showcase American Indian and Alaska Native traditional knowledge.
- 2.3.3 Share knowledge with leadership and staff on the appropriate use and protection of traditional ecological knowledge and wisdom.

OBJECTIVE 2.4

Collaborate with leadership and staff in Forest Service Research and Development to provide technical and educational assistance, pursue joint research projects, and transfer technology to American Indian and Alaska Native Tribal governments and communities.

OUTCOME

Increased application of relevant knowledge and technologies.

ACTIONS

- 2.4.1 Create and foster a coordinated approach for collaborative efforts between Research and Development personnel and Tribes.
- 2.4.2 Encourage opportunities for mutually beneficial research projects that support the needs identified by Tribal resource staffs, colleges, and communities.



GOAL 3: PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Promote integration and utility of the Tribal Relations Program throughout the agency.

OBJECTIVE 3.1

Improve Forest Service leadership engagement in the Tribal Relations Program.

OUTCOME

Tribes regard Forest Service leadership as readily and meaningfully engaging in the Tribal Relations Program.

ACTIONS

- 3.1.1 Provide messages for Forest Service leadership to use in speeches, briefings, and updates, where appropriate.
- 3.1.2 Co-organize “on-the-ground” events and opportunities with Forest Service leadership and American Indian and Alaska Native governments and communities to improve relationships and mutual understanding.
- 3.1.3 Identify opportunities to provide Tribal Relations Program information, such as at resource trainings, leadership team meetings, line officer sessions, and professional society meetings.

OBJECTIVE 3.2

Implement an integrated and effective Tribal Relations Program.

OUTCOME

Heightened awareness of American Indian and Alaska Native concerns and needs, as well as the agency’s success in addressing those appropriately.

ACTIONS

- 3.2.1 Increase Tribal Relations Program integration with key staffs in all Deputy Areas.
- 3.2.2 Participate in team building opportunities to enhance the Tribal Relations Program Team’s collective identity and collaborative capabilities.
- 3.2.3 Establish an awards program sponsored by the Tribal Relations Program that highlights superior leadership in Tribal Relations.
- 3.2.4 Use existing communication tools to share agency outcomes, progress, etc., including the portal Web site, electronic databases, publications, and program newsletter with Tribal partners.
- 3.2.5 Develop a National Tribal Relations Accomplishment Report that covers accomplishments in all Deputy Areas. Include external and internal partners to identify relevant reporting categories.
- 3.2.6 Conduct region, station, and area program reviews to assess working relationships with Tribes.

OBJECTIVE 3.3

Increase and advance American Indians and Alaska Natives within the Forest Service workforce.

OUTCOME

Increased representation of American Indians and Alaska Natives in staff and leadership positions.

ACTIONS

- 3.3.1 Support Civil Rights to improve outreach, internships, and hiring of American Indians and Alaska Natives in the agency.
- 3.3.2 Mentor American Indian and Alaska Native employees for recruitment, retention, and advancement in the agency.



ALIGNMENT WITH THE FOREST SERVICE STRATEGIC PLAN

Managing the Nation's forests and grasslands requires the complex integration of a diverse workforce, efficient management of capital resources, and cooperative partnerships. The Tribal Relations Program is a unifying force that crosses programmatic boundaries. The Tribal Relations Program also plays an important role in supporting specific strategic goals and objectives of the Forest Service.

GOAL 1	Restore, Sustain, and Enhance the Nation's Forests and Grasslands.	<i>Effective government-to-government relationships with Tribes strengthen the agency's ability to identify and implement stewardship objectives that enhance forest ecosystems and restore and improve the health of the land. Traditional knowledge, values, and perspectives diversify approaches to tough problems, such as climate change and water quality and quantity.</i>
GOAL 2	Provide and Sustain Benefits to the American People.	<i>Involving Tribes in Forest Service programs and activities increases the agency's ability to be responsive to local and affiliated community needs and interests.</i>
GOAL 3	Conserve Open Space.	<i>Collaboration between the Forest Service and Tribes in managing and maintaining forests and grasslands improves responses to landscape fragmentation and strengthens sustainability.</i>
GOAL 4	Sustain and Enhance Outdoor Recreation Opportunities.	<i>Consultation and collaboration with American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes can enhance educational and cultural experiences. By providing new insights, Tribal stories and traditions can function as important components of broad outdoor recreational opportunities across the Nation's forests and grasslands.</i>
GOAL 5	Maintain Basic Management Capabilities of the Forest Service.	<i>Government-to-government relationships with Tribes increase the agency's ability to accomplish its mission through leveraging partnerships and introducing diverse viewpoints and expertise.</i>
GOAL 6	Engage Urban America with Forest Service Programs.	<i>Integrating Tribal perspectives on cultural and natural resources into agency programs in urban areas connects large numbers of the public to landscapes in ways not otherwise possible. It also enhances the agency's ability to incorporate traditional Tribal concepts in its own land management decisions and activities.</i>
GOAL 7	Provide Science-Based Applications and Tools for Sustainable Natural Resources Management.	<i>The Tribal Relations Program plays a critical role in fostering an organizational culture that brings together traditional knowledge and Western science for sustainable land management. Joint research projects between the agency and Tribes increase the available knowledge for managing cultural and natural resources.</i>



DOCUMENTS IMPORTANT TO DEVELOPING THE TRIBAL RELATIONS PROGRAM

The Forest Service Tribal Relations Program Strategic Plan, Fiscal Years 2010–2013, is the latest bead in the string of beads—written policies, published documents, and unpublished reports—that make up the written legacy of the program. Still young, the Tribal Relations Program is evolving from earlier identities and direction, becoming more general in some areas and more specific in others. The strategic plan reflects that movement. The following products serve as the foundational springboard for the still-evolving program:

THE FOUR-POINT POLICY

The Forest Service established its first formal policy regarding Tribal Relations as Forest Service Manual (FSM) 1564, an amendment to FSM 1500. Effective on June 1, 1990, this policy directed Forest Service employees to:

- Maintain a governmental relationship with federally recognized Tribal governments.
- Implement programs and activities honoring Indian treaty rights and fulfill legally mandated trust responsibilities to the extent they are determined applicable to National Forest System lands.
- Administer programs and activities to address and be sensitive to traditional American Indian and Alaska Native religious beliefs and practices.
- Provide research, transfer of technology, and technical assistance to Tribal governments.

FOREST SERVICE NATIONAL RESOURCE BOOK ON AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE RELATIONS

Recognizing a need to describe and improve implementation of the 1990 policy, the Washington Office appointed a task group to create a book of “critical information to develop or improve government-to-government relations with all Federally Recognized American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes.” Published in 1997 as the Forest Service National Resource Book on American Indian and Alaska Native Relations (FS-600), this book has become known as “the Yellow Book” and is a standard fixture on line officers’ and staff’s desks.

THE REPORT OF THE NATIONAL TRIBAL RELATIONS PROGRAM TASK FORCE


Forest Service leadership identified a need to create more consistency in implementation of Tribal Relations policies and direction and, in October 1999, the Chief Operations Officer for the agency commissioned a National Tribal Relations Task Force to “develop recommendations to improve working relationships with Indian Tribes.” The Task Force completed its analysis and delivered a “Discussion Draft” that was printed in August 2000. The report included findings and recommendations.

THE REPORT OF THE NATIONAL TRIBAL RELATIONS PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

In April 2001, the Deputy Chief for State and Private Forestry established the National Tribal Relations Program Implementation Team to refine the work of the task force. This team addressed the 12 specific issues raised by the task force and recommended actions for each issue. Nearly all of the recommendations have come to fruition, whole or in part, and the remaining few are still being worked on. Printed in 2003, the Implementation Team Report has served as another touch point for Tribal Relations Program personnel and others as the program continues to grow and evolve.

FSM REVISIONS OF 2004

A major revision and expansion of the Tribal Relations directives (Amendment 1500–2004–3) in FSM 1563 became effective in March 2004. These directives provide the foundation for current implementation of the program throughout the agency. The directives will be updated periodically to reflect changes in legislation, regulation, and policy.



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